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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of e-mail on English language learning among college freshmen enrolled in a remedial English class. English was considered the first or second foreign language for all participants. Students were divided into two groups. One group was allowed face to face communication in class and during office hours with the educator, while the other was allowed face to face communication in class and e-mail communication outside of class with the educator. The researcher analyzed frequency and content of communication, address style, long-term communication, and communication dynamics. By using e-mail, students became empowered learners who were active, responsible, and motivated to communicate to enhance their language learning. As active learners, they could create and edit a message, then send it at their own pace. They expected to receive feedback but were not anxious because it took place in a nonthreatening, nonjudgemental environment. Peer pressure and modeling were minimal in the e-mail condition. The non-e-mail group felt more peer pressure and lack of privacy, and they tended to be more passive learners. The presence of others (in the classroom or the educators office) influenced students perceptions, evaluation, and behavior. Tables and figures are appended. (Contains 44 references.) (SM)

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The Influence Of Email On Language Learning: A Positive Impact

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to investigate the influence of email on English-language learning. Results show that technology provides fertile ground for instructor-student bonding, feedback, confidence building and non-threatening communication Recommendations are made to integrate the positive impact of email in the ELL setting in the Arab world today.

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Language educators attempt to create classrooms that enable students to acquire language skills within a socially constructed reality. That is why "talented people will not always succeed in life, but people with genuinely high self esteems will find ways to (Shindler, 2002, p. 5).Reflect for a moment on how true this is of the the language classroom. However, Shindler (2002) observes that what the educators do and say and how they instruct the learners on what to do and say greatly influences the students. Thus, language educators consider the success of their teaching endeavor to be closely related to the promotion of student self esteem, be it in a learner or teacher centered learning environment. In his article, *Creating a Psychology of Success in the Classroom*, Shindler (2002) not only provided literature on self-esteem to support this, but also concluded that promoting self-esteem in the learning environment will produce more successful, diligent, risk-taking, determined and autonomous learners.

Educators often note that when their students feel empowered and in control of their learning, they are able to do more within the learning environment. Feeling empowered means having a sense of confidence in what one attempts to do. But Shindler (2002) cautioned against educators focusing on making the learners feel good about what they attempt to do; he stressed instead on the need for educators to focus on ways to get the students to produce quality results long term.

McLester (2001) observed that "poised between the past and the future, the industrial and the technology, the familiar and the unknown, educators are being challenged to reinvent, redesign and reshape the learning experience" (p. 30). Similarly, Kameda (1999) noted that educators are facing the challenge and are creating "dynamic, ... beyond the text and the 'talking head' of the teacher" activities that "engage and stretch the curiosity of the students" (p. 181). Keeping the challenge language educators face today in mind, I decided to integrate technology, interactively, into my students' learning to address my teaching environment and their learning autonomy. .

Many educators still perceive the role of the computer & Internet in language learning skeptically (McKeon, 1999; Kulik & Kulik, 1991). Yet the literature continues to support the notion that technology has a powerful role to play, especially when the English language being acquired is not native language (Giardini & Vergaro, 1998; Halliday, 1998; Sabieh, 1998; 2002).

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LeLoup and Ponterio (1997) in their paper, *Internet Technologies for Authentic Language Learning Experiences*, discussed the significance of using email-based activities in foreign language classroom as a way to enrich foreign language learning. Having a medium in which there has been created cultural exchange, a social milieu, and target language interactivity is considered to be a medium with the key components to enhance the language learning venture (Kameda, 1999; LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997; Rubisch, Carr & Breman, 2000).

The purpose of the paper is to investigate the influence of electronic mail (e-mail) on English language learning. The focus here is on enriching the language classroom not by having the learners exchange information with others electronically, but by increasing their confidence and self-esteem through the use of the basic e-mail service which, in turn, will empower them as students attempting to learn a target language.

It is hypothesized that the students who use electronic mail to correspond with the educator outside of the class period are more communicative and language learning focused in general than the students who go to the educator's office for discussion.

I believe skeptical outlooks on the use of technology in the teaching/learning environment center around two excuses. The first excuse is that the research available to date has not provided, with certainty that computer assisted learning guarantees increased achievement (eg. McKeon, 1999; Kulik & Kulik, 1991). Some educators even go so far as to dismiss the technology simply because of the on going controversy that CAL may not have a significant direct or linear impact on teaching and learning (eg. Hamilton,1998; Halliday, 1973; Roblyer, Edwards & Havriluk. 1997)

The second excuse I believe keeps educators skeptical about the technology is due to the fear of it use (Sabieh, 2000b; 2001). This is not to say that the fear simply centers around the educators fear of being replaced by the tool. The fear is much deeper. I believe it is based on assumptions. So it is only customary to fear what is not known, to fear the inability to use computer or to use the computer in the contexts of language teaching, to fear the tool that is seen as a competitor as opposed to a collaborator in the teaching endeavor, and to fear the tool that may already be an established partner to the students

To over come such skepticism, the educator needs to become aware, through education, of what it is that the technology has to offer. The use of technology in the teaching/language environment I believe has six major contributions (Sabieh, 2000a).

First, it provides for the learners and the educator a power medium to incorporate the cognitive, the behavioral, and affective domains as it interactivity builds on the demands of individualized cognitive construction (Sabieh, 1998).

Second, it provides a non-threatening environment. According to Schank, a main advantage of the technology is that it provides the learners with what he calls a "safe environment" (McLester, 2001, p. 32). This, he puts forward, offers the diverse learners opportunity to meet their learning needs and styles which a traditional classroom in most instances fails to offer.

Third, the technology provides reinforces a student driven medium; paced and controlled by the learners themselves in most instances. Fourth, it provides a personal medium, individualized and private, free of peer judgment. Fifth, it acts as a delivery medium. The technology links the learners to the task; the educators to the learners, and the task to the educator.

And, sixth, the technology must retain interactivity to maintain a motivating medium for use. McLester (2001) stressed that it was important that the technology be interactive for it to motivate the active learners and maintain their interest in enhancing their language learning process.

The six contributions parallel the conditions for effective language learning, especially language other than the native language, to take place.

In an effective language learning set up, it is very important that the following conditions are met for the language learners to successfully acquire the target language. The students must become empowered learners, must receive immediate feedback, must experience personal growth, must use the language in an interactive manner, must feel the learning process is individualized, must feel that their learning styles and needs are addressed, must consider their cognitive ability to process the information, but more importantly, it must address their affective needs. The learning environment must be supportive. And, finally, the most important factor is that the condition must enable the students to become active in their learning.

Detailed conditions such as communicative competencies; grammar, linguistic coding, socio-cultural rules and strategies, pace and practice responses; positive interlanguage differences and immersion in the target language may also be considered in the building of the overall picture (Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 1991a; 1991b; Pica, 1994).

The language educator is expected to find ways to provide such conditions to the language students.

The language educator's main purpose in any given teaching/language environment, in general, is to get the students to acquire target language effectively to be able to communicate in an academic and non-academic medium with near native language fluency.

To do so successfully, it is my belief that there needs to be a change in the perception of classroom environment for the language learner. In general, most classroom set-ups allow for judgment to take place reinforcing the idea of the classroom room being threatening to the well being of a student. Moreover, it tends to be manipulated and controlled by high achievers or by students who have high self-esteem and high confidence in themselves.

I believe for students to flourish, the teaching/learning environment should become non-threatening with active learners and decision makers that collaborate in their language learning efforts. The educators should take on very active roles to assist their students in self-evaluating their degree of language learning mastery.

The classroom environment should be one that promotes the students' need for autonomy and increased locus of control. Two major factors that I believe are the basis to the effective teaching/learning set up.

The students need to view the teaching/learning environment less threatening to succeed.

To do so, I would make the environment less threatening by having the students experience increased control over their learning environment. Shindler(2002) noted that it was important to provide the students with a clearly spelt out system. Such knowledge will enable them to know exactly how feedback will be provided and what criterion referenced system they are to target and relate to in their learning progress.

I would ensure that the environment provided more collaboration throught increasing the rapport amongst the individuals in the environment. Rubisch, Carr and Breman (2000) stressed on the importance of getting better understanding amongst diverse individuals in any interactive set-up. By the same token, I would also provide support. In general, it is very important for the students to feel able to approach the educator, feel that she is there for them, feels that she cares for their progress and for their feelings. This would enable the bonding – relationships to take place which will also address the learners' needs and styles, thus, increasing self-esteem and self-confidence in the working environment.

Moreover, I would enable students to increase their internal locus of control by giving them the freedom to make personal choices and by providing them with face-to-face communication possibilities. According to Minsky and Marin (1999), such face-to-face contact is a rich medium since it provides the students with verbal and nonverbal cues to work with to interpret the message with in the lessons.

Finally, I would add to the above ways of producing a less threatening environment one more important factor specific to a group of students an element of faceless communication. This would be by introducing the group to basic electronic mediated communication, e-mail, with the educator. The purpose here is to see if this group will be more communicative and learner focused that the others who communicated only in a face-to-face medium since they will have used their autonomy to decide to put the technology into play.

The literature on electronic mediated communication use has advanced the e-mail as a significant educational tool since it enables learners to appraise information, constructively build communication and increase relations in authentic settings (Haworth, 1999; Leahy, 1999; McKeon, 1999). Moreover, the literature supports the idea that with the emergence of many e-mail practices, it is important that e-mail correspondence become a distinct genre in the realm of writing (Dudeney, 2000; Woodring-Blasé, 2000).

Cohen (1996) defines e-mail as a tool that "simplifies communication" between parties, and it involves "plain text and concise straightforward prose" (48). Wallace and Wingate (2001) define e-mail as "an amazing way to send messages from one computer to another" (p. 2). As a tool it has been studied in relation to motivation (Gray & Stockwell, 1998) and increased participation and bond formation (Aitsiselmi, 1999).

Although e-mail calls for the individual to self-initiate the action to use it, it is considered to be an easy (reply button), efficient and polite communicative tool. Its use reinforces the role of active learner where by each student is task-oriented and responsible for his own learning (McLester, 2001). More importantly, it promotes meta-cognitive awareness (Jones, 2001). The students have to actively choose to e-mail, to write a note, to edit the writing, etc... before sending it off to the recipient. So, the students are able to not only compose and edit their own work, but to also reflect on issues, past messages, and the use of the Internet as a resource to enhance the exchange (Jones, 2001; Shield, Weininger & Davies, 1999). Another point in favor of its use is that it enables its use at the students' own convenience and in a safe and private environment (Haworth, 1999; McLester 2001; Minsky & Marin, 1999). This is a condition that is not so easily maintained in a classroom environment.

E-mail condition of use is ideal to bring people together. An article in the September 20, 1999 issue of Newsweek's Science and Technology section,

acknowledges the positive nature of email use. Its title summarizes it all -- *We've got mail—Always: It saves time and wastes it, makes life simpler and more complicated, brings us together and pushes us apart. Love it and hate it, it's everywhere, all the time and here to stay*. The article went on to outline the idea that e-mail provides a medium to encourage the building of relationships since it provides semi-risk free environments that lacks immediate threats of rejection. Accordingly, it contends that the "too easy, too casual" tool is "the perfect tool for a culture of hyper stimulation since individuals act before they think when using email, bringing with it "new forms of worldwide human collaboration" (p. 60).

Smeaton and Waters (2000) also noted in their article, *An Asynchronous communication system to support student teachers*, that e-mail exchanges provided the students with a support system to alleviate anxiety during times when the learning itself was considered stressful. This may be especially true when the students are using the e-mail medium to reinforce skills and concepts (McLester, 2001)..

Dalton, Sargent and Ste (2000) in their research on e-mail communication stressed its importance as a promoter to bonding. Bonds were formed between medical students and schoolchildren due to the use e-mail to identify and meet communicative needs that strengthened the medical students awareness of what information they needed to give the children and their parents about the hazards of smoking since it allowed for them to become aware of what the families wanted out of the relationship.

Also, McKeon (1999) used e-mail communication as a novel process to converse on private issues with the students. This usage parallels Vygotsky's (1978) reinforcement of the significance of societal dialogue—the interactivity of it--as the exchange is reinforced by the educator and by the technology the students use. Likewise, Staton (1988) and Kasten (1997) stressed on the interactive aspect of the relationship and the affective factors it promotes.

Thus, considering all that the e-mail medium has to offer, the e-mail medium may in itself be the ideal tool for the educator to use to build up the students' affective domain in the language learning process.

The role of affective factors in the overall learning process is paramount when language learning in a classroom set up is considered. Thus, by considering the role of affective factors in e-mail use vis a vis the leaning paradigm becomes a significant factor to consider in the present study.

In any learning condition it is important that students have self-esteem, perceived locus of control, feelings of belonging, self-efficacy and self-confidence. Each student, to a degree, takes those affective factors into account daily as he endeavors to function with in society. The following definitions of the various influencing factors are defined to depict the role each plays in influencing how a student thinks or behaves.

One main affective factor to consider is self-esteem. Self-esteem is considered to be a collection of unconscious self-beliefs that have been acquired over a period of time—usually a lifetime—that reflects on a person's insight into his abilities. A second important affective factor is control. By having an internal locus of control, Minsky and Marin (1999) noted that a person believes that he is in control of his thoughts, behavior and actions. Self-confidence, another effective affective factor and to a large extent closely related to the first one, is the belief that a person is able to take on the challenge needed to overcome a learning situation.

Another very important affective factor is the sense of belonging. A sense of belonging, I believe, is an affective factor that is derived internally from the person but is controlled by external feeling and behavior. Sense of belonging is the degree of acceptance person receives from being a member of a group. According to Sarokon (1986), when students are in an environment that has emotional support and very little negative criticism or judgment, they flourish and feel empowered to take on risks and communicated in a classroom. This sense of belonging indirectly adds to the students' motivation to achieve through his direct perception of increased locus of control (Klein & Keller, 1990). The students' active learning process is due in part because they perceive the learning environment to be their social niches to self develop in the language learning process.

The final affective factor considered is self-efficacy. It is the perception of oneself as proficient in the learning environment. Self-efficacy is further explained as a state in which one believes in the success of carrying out a desired action. (Bandura 1977)

All these factors within the students' learning paradigm relate directly to their self-perception of conditions that exist with in the actual face to face teaching/learning environment and the faceless environment. Given all the above definitions, autonomy becomes possible when the factors come into play in the process. Jones (2001) notes that educators today are more willing to integrate technology into their teaching since it promotes learner autonomy, which is one of the keys to language acquisition.

However, Jones (2001) notes that promoting active learners is related to the role the educator plays in the learning process. He contends that the very success of the technology in the teaching/learning environment depends to a great extent on the active role of the educator. It is the educator who must ensure that the students are provided with structured learning activities in order to promote dialogue, active learner involvement, educator support and learner control, especially if the communication is to take place in a faceless medium (Coomey & Stephenson, 2001)

Method

Sample. The sample was made up of 30 first year students enrolled in a remedial class of English at a private university. They were students majoring either in science, computer science or engineering. English was considered to be their first or second foreign language.

Twenty-five out of the thirty subjects classified themselves as being computer literate—that is they knew how to use basic Microsoft programs and e-mail. Five subjects out of the thirty classified themselves as computer illiterate and they had never used e-mail before. Moreover, 15 subjects considered themselves to be frequent (daily) users of e-mail, whereas eight subjects considered themselves to be occasional (weekly) users of e-mail, and two out of the thirty considered themselves to be rare (monthly) users of e-mail.

Settings. Three mediums of learning were used in enhancing communicative exchange between the students and the educator.

First, the classroom was where the students communicated with the educator individually or in group; Second, the basic e-mail model was where a group of students interacted individually in a personal email contexts using Microsoft Outlook software

with access facilitation either through the institutional mail box, an ISP or a web based email server; and, third, the educator's office was where a group of students interacted individually with the instructor during the office hours--specifically being Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from noon until one in the afternoon, and on Tuesday and Thursday from twelve thirty until one thirty or from three to four thirty in the afternoon. Although students came to the office to interact in a personal context, it was not always guaranteed that they saw the educator individually since other students may have been present

Educator. I was the educator and researcher. I am a native speaker of English. I had never been in contact with the subjects before the semester started. During my first contact with the students, I outlined the research proposal.

Throughout the semester, I played an active role in the course. I planned the course, the lessons, the activities; I was a deliverer of information and at the same time a facilitator, guide, supporter, evaluator, and observer to all the students in their endeavor to learn the language.

Apart from the class exchange, I used the e-mail messages and the office hour exchanges to become more aware of what the students needed to enhance the learning process. As the days went on, I observed the factors that enabled the students to become more and more communicative in nature.

Procedure. For a period of eight weeks of the semester, the subjects were observed in the classroom.

On the first day of class, the educator outlined the research process and randomly divided the subjects into the two groups. They were then told the conditions of how each group was to function in and out of the classroom. One group was to have face to face communication in the class and during office hours with the educator while the other group was to have face to face in the class and e-mail communication outside the class setting. The first group was labeled as the face communication group and the latter was labeled as the faceless communication group.

All students were told that during the class session they could communicate with their peers and with the instructor on a face-to-face basis as often as they wanted. However, out side class, communication was limited to the experimental condition they were assigned to.

The students were given the educator's office hours and e-mail address. They were told that the purpose of the communication was centered around their language learning process. They were free to choose when and how to communicate out side the class setting. . The one condition was that they had to communicate in the target language. They could reinforce its use, clarify points discussed in class, submit work, discuss topics of interest and receive feedback. In turn, the educator's communication with the subjects was similar to that in class role. It was learner initiated and it centered on guidance, facilitation, support, rapport, bonding, increasing their self esteem, building their self confidence, addressing their learning needs and styles.

Points to note. There were five points I took into consideration that I believed influenced the communication process between the subjects and the educator.

The subjects came from the same cultural background; however, I came form a different culture. However, as I respected the diversity, they too respected it and used it to help in their bonding process.

Although course methodology was set up to be learner-centered, the students being used to more traditional leaning methods still placed a high value on the educator's opinion, perception, acknowledgement and approval in all that they undertook.

Third, the communication that was to take place was to be between a native and non-native speaker of English. Moreover, the educator's feed back tone was in relation to the subjects' tone of communication. Basically what I did was take my lead from the subjects.

Finally, the fifth point, which to a certain degree I consider pivotal to the whole project, was that the educator never followed up the subjects to communicate with educator. It was the subjects' internal locus of control that reinforced and maintained their motivation to contact the educator. They decided on their own to communicate. In turn, the educator helped them in their endeavor and reciprocated the communication.

Results

All communication was done using the English language.

The result were analyzed on five levels: Frequency of communication, content of communication, address style, long term communication, and communication dynamics during the classroom set up. Wherever it was needed, I analyzed the results using a time frame to help clarify the result outcomes.

Frequency of communication. The faceless group on average communicated with the educator 6.5 times more than the face group; on average a total of 473 emails were received while 76 visits were made.

Out of the 15 subjects who used the e-mail as a means to communicate with the educator outside the class time, six subjects claimed to be frequent users of email; five occasional, and two rare users. Two said they never had used e-mail before.

The first two weeks, 93 percent of the subjects sent e-mails the nights of the day the class had been scheduled while 7% sent no email.

During the third and fourth week, 66% sent emails the night before the class and the night of the class, 26% sent the night of the class, and 7% sent one email.

During the fourth to eighth week, 86% sent email at least 5-6 times per week, 7% sent emails on the night of the class, and 7% did not send anything.

Table 1 shows the frequency of communication between subjects and educator in the faceless communication setting.

In the face communication group, the results were significantly different for the 15 subjects when compared to the faceless group.

During the first and second week, 33% came to the office right before the class hour, 66% did not bother.

During the third and fourth week, 20% came before the class hour, 20% came after the class hour, and 60% did not bother.

During the fourth to sixth week, 20% came before the class hour, 27% came after the class hour, 13% came during other office hour days, 13% came before class hour and during other office hours days, and 27% did not bother.

During week six to eight, 40% came before the class hour, 20% after the class hour, 20% came during other office hour days, and 20% came before the class hour and on other office hour days.

Table 2 shows the frequency of communication between subjects and educator in the face communication setting

Content of communication. The content of the communication was also evaluated.

During week one, the faceless group sent e-mail messages related to the course.

During week two and three, the e-mail messages were mostly course related and material related to their well being and mine.

During week four to eight, the e-mail messages were, although related to the course material, more focused questions. They also included personal information about themselves, information they wanted to share with me, news items, and jokes

The face group communicators also exchanged information concerning the course as did the faceless group; however, in general they kept their verbal exchange more neutral.

During week one to three, the messages were related to the course.

During week four to eight, the exchange related mostly to the course material, but the exchange was also related to their well being or mine.

Address style. As a whole, the faceless communication group tended to become more informal as the weeks went by when compared to the face communication group. However, both groups communicated more formally than informally when discussing course related material.

Eighty-five percent of the e-mail messages tended to shift from a more formal style to a more informal style by week eight. Figure 1 shows an example of two e-mail messages from the same student (student A) over the first two weeks to show the message shift from formal to informal. Figure 2 shows an example of three e-mail messages from the same student (student B) over the time period (week 2 until week 7) to show the message shift from formal to informal

Ninety-five percent of the e-mail messages that contained statements related to course work had integrated in it formal statements while 90% of the e-mail messages that included personal information initiated by the student contained informal statements. Figure 3 shows an example of six e-mail messages from the same student (student C) over a time period from week 2 of research project until after the semester ended to show the message shift from formal to informal

Of the face communication group, the verbal communication was 95% of the times formal. However, during week four until eight, the verbal exchange fifteen percent of the time went from formal to informal when personal matters were discussed.

Long-term communication. One year after the research was conducted, 27% of the subjects in the faceless communication group have, to date, maintained informal e-mail communication with me. Moreover, 13% of that group stops by my office on average once a month to say hello.

Finally, for one week after the September 11, 2001 incident, I received from 66% of the group informal e-mail messages asking about my safety and well being.

Compared to the face communication group, 27% of the group stopped by my office at the end of September, during the registration period for the Fall semester to see if I was okay after the September 11th incident.

Communication dynamics during class session. The analysis of the communication dynamics that took place in the class set up was directly related to the experimental group they belonged to.

During week 1, I observed the subjects and to took notes. That week all the class session were the same.

During the second and third weeks, the two groups were equally active.

However, during the fourth to sixth weeks, 70 % of the faceless communication group became active communicators compare to 50 % of the face communication group.

During week seven, 75% of the e-mail communicators were active in the classroom and 60% of the face communicators were active.

During week eight, 85% of the email communicators were active while the face communication group remained the same; 60% of the communicators were active.

Overall observation. In the overall observation of the class set up, I can say, with certainty, that both passive and active learners were present through out the teaching/learning sessions. There existed a heterogeneous mix that was randomly divided into two experimental conditions.

However, the class sessions became increasingly active as the sessions went on since the students' affective factors came into play and influenced their cognitive processing and behavior domains.

The subjects, especially those who were in the faceless communication group, became more motivated to involve themselves in the class setting.

What is more is that the faceless communicators were not constrained by a timeframe like the face communicators. Sending out e-mail exchanges could be done at anytime whereas the educator's office hours limited the students' freedom of choice as to when to communicate with the educator and see her.

Lastly, e-mail messages, as opposed to verbal messages, in general, were more focused in direction. The purpose of each message was clear. That was true irrespective of whether the exchange had to do with a course or a personal issue.

Discussion

Using an electronic mediated environment with the students allows them to create a bridge between the teaching/learning environment, the language, their peers, their educator and themselves. By using a faceless communication medium, the subjects become empowered learners, active, responsible and motivated to communicate in the target to enhance their language learning skill. Similarly, they are able to explore their learning needs and apply their learning style As active learners, they create a message, edit the message and send the message to the educator at their own pace and initiation. In turn, the learners expect to receive immediate feedback on their work; however, this is not anxiety filled since it takes place in a non-threatening environment with very little judgmental presence. Peer pressure and modeling factors remain minimal since the communication is faceless. Moreover, since none of the peers know when the subjects are in contact with the educator, they are not able to influence their work. This was not the case in the face communication situation. Social modeling and social pressure to conform was not as minimized as in the email exchange opportunities (Minsky & Marin, 1999). The face communication subjects had to interact on campus in the midst of other university students. They were given very little privacy in their learning endeavor because even when they initiated the action to communicate with the educator in the

office, there was no certainty that their action was pressured by peer affiliation, or whether it is peer related or self initiated. More so, there is no certainty that the actual face exchange is one of privacy either since the educator may have other students in the office, Knowing that some form of judgment or loss of control may be encountered in the communication, forces the student to unconsciously pull away to maintain self efficacy, confidence, and self-esteem. To maximize their internal locus of control; subjects chose when and how to interact to form personal and professional bonds first with the educator and then with the peers in the class set up. This increases their self-esteem and self-confidence making them better able to tackle the complex nature of acquiring a target language.

In general, the subjects in face-to-face communication condition tend to be more passive in their learning endeavor. They are more duty bound by group requirements, peer modeling influences and perceptions when it comes to making a decision. This dilemma is seen clearly in the face communication group. This tends to be the case even though they are able to create a bridge between the learning environments, the target language itself, their peers, their educator and themselves. They remain responsible for their own learning, but they remain minimally active and in control of their learning process, influence by their sense of belonging.

In addition to the above discussion points, the subjects under the two conditions are able to receive immediate feedback on the work submitted. However, the presence of others, other than the educator, in their communication set up during the office hours or the fact that the communication exchange is face-to-face influences the students perceptions, evaluation and behavior as opposed to a faceless communication set up. The feedback they receive is interpreted as more critical in the face to face, especially in the presence of others. Moreover, their perception of self-control as well as their development of personal and professional bonds remains influenced by their self-esteem and confidence as it related to their subjective interpretation of the surrounding climate. This is not the case in a faceless communication. The subject learns to count on himself for decision-making instances.

Thus, as part of the overall equation of what is needed to most effectively enhance the teaching/learning environment, the interpretation of the overall results points to the creation and maintenance of the bond between the educator and the learner. Stockwell and Levy (2001) noted that the value of the bond was related to email sustainability, especially since a form of friendship had developed based on an attempt to seek out interests with the partner. The total number of e-mail messages averaged around 473 exchanges to a mere 76 face communication exchanges. Such bond development between the educator and the students paves the way for the needed affective factors to make the learner active in the teaching/learning environment. The students who have a bond with the educator tend to be more active learners in the class communicative process, enhancing their language learning focus and taking advantage of the social interactions to work on their communicative competencies with in the class set up. So it is important for the educator to take on a very active role not only with in the classroom or office setting, but, also. electronically.

The results of the study imply the significant use of technology in a language-learning endeavor. It follows that the use of the e-mail exchange itself is to be seen as a language learning opportunity. In the present research, the email exchange use is basic

and linear between each student and the educator. This need not always be the case. This means that the use of e-mail communication by the students is not only to be used to build rapport with the educator, but also with the peers through more than just basic exchange mediums. Moreover, the use of e-mail is not only to build students affective skills, but also to build language learning skills integration.

In conclusion, it can be said that technology, as is experienced in the present study, is a powerful partner to help the educator enhance the students' language learning process. The electronic mediated environment is fertile ground for the development of the educator-student bond, for feedback, for increased self-esteem, for increased confidence building and promoting non-threatening communications. All of which are necessary factors needed for effective target language learning to take place The electronic mediated exchange enables the development of positive rapport, support, collaboration, cooperation and non-threatening mediums where barriers to communication do not exist.

Thus, it is recommended that in using the positive impact of electronic mail in the EFL, ESL or ESP setting in the Arab world today, acquisition of the language and the maintenance of its fluency will be facilitated.

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Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Table 1

Frequency of communication between subjects and educator in the faceless communication setting: Distribution of raw results as defined by the distribution of e-mail messages per week per subject's use of e-mail

Freq/ wk	Night before class					Night of class					Other (times/week)					No e-mail exchange				
Use of e-mail	F	O	R	N	#	F	O	R	N	#	F	O	R	N	#	F	O	R	N	#
Wk 1-2	-	-	-	-	-	6	4	2	2	**14**	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
Wk 3-4	5	3	1	1	**10**	1	2	-	1	**4**	- (1 time)	-	1	-	**1**	-	-	-	-	-
Wk 5-8	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	**1**	5 (5-6 times)	4	2	2	**13**	-	1	-	-	**1**

N= 15 subjects

F: Frequent e-mail user; O: occasional; R: rare; N; never uses e-mail

Table 2

Frequency of communication between subjects and educator in the face communication setting: Distribution of raw results as defined by the face to face visits per week in the office

Frequency/ week	Before class	After class	Before class & other OH	Other OHs	No OH exchange
Wk 1-2	5	-	-	-	10
Wk 3-4	3	3	-	-	9
Wk 5-6	3	4	-	2	4
Wk 7-8	6	3	3	3	3

N= 15 subjects

OH: office hour

A 1 (wk1)	**Miss, please find attached the information about my project. Regards,** Name Surname
A 2 (wk2)	**Hi miss!! Just I want from u to check me this paragraph about air pollution.... Thanks a lot...** **Have a nice day,,,,** **Regards,** Name Surname

Figure 1. An example of two e-mail messages from the same student (student A) over the first two weeks to show the message shift from formal to informal (bold: to indicate actual terms)

B 1 (wk2)	**RE: Hello!** **Hi miss, Just I want from u to correct me this paragraph, it is not included in my term paper,** **I am practicing to improve my writing skills.** **Thanks a lot**
B 2 (wk5)	**Re: My Term Paper** **Dear Dr. Sabieh,** **Hi, it is** NAME SURNAME. **Ur ENL 110 F Student… recognize me ☺.** **1st) I need to aske you about the CD…when am I supposed to give it to u?** **2nd) The attached file is my term paper.** **I am 300% sure that the file does not contain a virus. Am I am responsible for it.** **I can not go to uni today cuz I have work (I work in ….)** **Thanks a lot for helping me.** **Plz Dr. Reply**
B3 (wk7)	**Re: HI** **Thanks a lot Doctor.** **Can I know plz my Term paper GRADE…** **Plz be generous with me…** **Thx a lot…** Name **(JOKE: WHAT DO YOU….)** **(ANSWER: ATTENTION!!!! ….)**

Figure 2. An example of three e-mail messages from the same student (student B) over the time period (week 2 until week 7) to show the message shift from formal to informal (bold: to indicate actual terms used)

C 1 Wk2	**Subject: Process Essay Outline!** **Hello DR. this outline is for the process essay. Please comment on it so that I would proceed with the essay. Thank you.** (puts outline for essay here)
C 2 Wk2	**the two C.I of the essay are the question and the article. I want to develop the question by saying what it is and developing the article by explaining a bit about it.** **these are the effects of building the Pyramid!!**
C 3 Wk 3-4	**Hi Dr, how are you. What do we have for tomorrow? I need you to tell me to know what books to bring. Do I have to bring the term paper book? As for the reading 6, you wrote the meanings on the back right? As for the webpage, It's not finished. Sorry Dr. Good night and sweet dreams.:)))**
C 4 Wk5	**Hi Dr. I hope I'm not disturbing you in this hour. I wanted to tell you that the intext documentation for the term paper is finished. As for the rest essays, I won't be able to finish them by tomorrow. So, do whatever you think is right and judgeful. I will bare anything you do.!!!** **P.S: I will try the very best to finish two of them** **Goodnight Dr. See you in university. !!!!!**
C 5 Wk7	**Hi Dr, you know, before I openend my email, I changed my topic sentences, and when I saw your sentences, I smiled because they were exactly the same. I think like you Dr!!! I always find a way out. And as you know, "Where there is a WILL, there is a WAY". Thank you Dr for encouraging me. I'd like to take ENL 221 with you this Fall, I guess. But let me pass 110 first!! BYE :)**
C 6 After sem. ended	**Hi Dr. don't worry, i'll visit u and sleep there :). I'm taking math in summer. I want to know when you will be in your office so that i can pay the visit.**

Figure 3. An example of six e-mail messages from the same student (student c) over a time period from week 2 of research project until after the semester ended to show the message shift from formal to informal (bold: to indicate actual terms)